



Market Bulletin

Bob Odom, Commissioner



America's going with the grain



VOL. 88, No. 18

www.ldaf.state.la.us

September 1, 2005



After a life of rodeoing and resort development, Ray Barnidge has settled into his 'last hurrah,' a secluded 30-acre horse riding ranch that sits smack in the middle of 98,000 acres of Kisatchie National Forest with its 88 miles of marked trails.

Back in the

SADDLE

one last time



By Sam Irwin

Lots of folks in Louisiana love and keep horses, but find their five-acre spread too small to give the pony a good workout.

And if a horse owner has enough land to ride it's usually on open pasture that is neither picturesque nor challenging.

But Ray Barnidge, owner of the 4B Ranch, a western-style spread located deep in the heart of the Kisatchie National Forest's Evangeline District, wants to help get people on horseback.

"The 4B is a kind of destination mini-resort for people who own their own horses," Barnidge explained. Complete with swimming pool, the 4B near Melder has four rustic cabins, three suites, 30 RV hookups and 47 horse stalls with fans and heaters. "We've got 30-acres here, but the back yard is 98,000 acres of Kistachie National Forest and 88 miles of multi-use trails."

Multi-use trails, that's code for horseback riding in the woods, thick woods with well marked trails criss-crossing verdant meadows, gullies, creeks, hills and mini-valleys.

The trails are tough enough to challenge the most seasoned horseman or woman and easy enough for the novice.

The Kisatchie trails also take the rider through historic Camp Claiborne, a World War II-era U.S. Army facility that trained a half-million soldiers for the D-Day European invasion. There are traces of the base throughout the forest and a popular saddlebag-lunch destination for a long trail ride is the ruins of the old Officer's Club.

The cabins are all air-conditioned with full baths and front porches. Two of the suites have kitchenettes. The Roy Rogers/Dale Evans Suite even has an antique bathtub.

Tresa Fenn of Nederland, Texas usually brings her living quarters/horse trailer to the 4B, but decided she needed a

quick getaway from the stress of her job as a new car buyer for a large east Texas auto dealership. She was met at the ranch by her longtime rodeo teammate, Mitzi Conn of Orange. The women compete in team penning and team sorting events and were anxious to give their quarter horses a good run.

"The cabins are much nicer than my trailer quarters," Fenn said. "I came to get away and relax so I chose to stay in a cabin."

"The cabins are rustic. Remember, you're coming to a ranch. Don't expect frills, but people with horses appreciate that. The cabins are comfortable and have all the amenities you need."

The appeal of the 4B Ranch is simple. There's space to handle all of the horseman's equipment (RVs, horse trailers, pickup trucks, saddles, etc.) and the trailhead is only a half-mile away.

Barnidge said the 4B was originally started as the 4B Dude Ranch six years ago. He changed it to the 4B Ranch a year ago when he purchased the spread. Back then the ranch provided horses. Now guests bring their own mounts.

"No dudes come here," Barnidge. "Real cowboys come here."

And folks from across the country visit the 4B Ranch, said real cowboy and retired oilman Wayne Weber.

"I've met folks from Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri and Indiana here," Weber said. "People from all over."

Weber said he and his family used to make day trips from their Lafayette Parish home to Camp Claiborne for trail rides before they knew about the 4B.

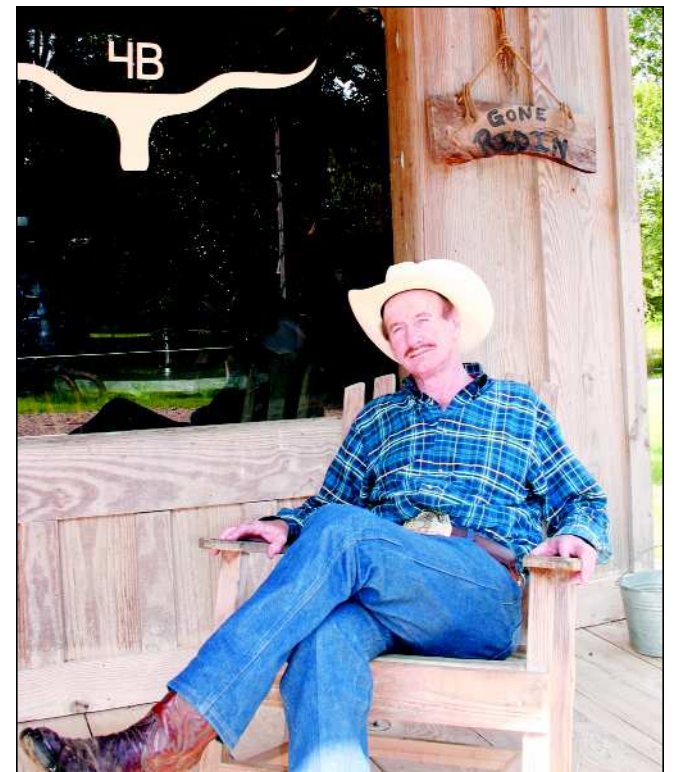
"I was introduced to this place several years ago," Weber said. "This is the only place in Louisiana that's close to home. It's nice and the atmosphere is great."

Weber said he and his family used to rent the cabins, but

soon found they were visiting the 4B so much they invested in a RV. He has visited the 4B so often his RV space is reserved.

Nearly every weekend is a busy time for the 4B, but Barnidge said the most hectic times are the holiday week-

See Saddling up, page 2



Ray Barnidge



Saddling Up, *continued from page 1*



ends. On those weekends Barnidge will hire a band to play lively cowboy music at the 4B Saloon, a rough-hewn plank building that also houses the Roy Rogers/Dale Evans Suite upstairs.

If there is no entertainment scheduled for the weekend, Barnidge said some of the guests usually find a guitar and do a little "pickin' and grinnin'" to entertain themselves.

"Sometimes we need more space," Barnidge said. "We usually can accommodate everyone and it adds to the camaraderie. The camaraderie here is unbelievable."

Most of that camaraderie is fostered at the 4B's pavilion and huge outdoor kitchen.

An array of large barbecue pits and an industrial stove can handle the needs of nearly any size group. A large refrigerator and restaurant style sinks take care of storing leftovers and cleanup.

Usually meals become large, potluck communal affairs where everyone pitches in.

Weber often becomes the informal head chef at these dinners.

"We get together and somebody will cook," Weber said. "Whoever wants to join the festivities can help us cook. Everybody brings a little bit or a dish. Sometimes, most likely on holidays, the camp itself furnishes the meats."

"If you're shy, just come pitch in, help with the dishes. You're not shy too long."

Weber said a lot of visitors find cooking at the outdoor kitchen more convenient than using the tiny RV or cabin kitchenettes.

Cooking and cabins are nice, but the Kisatchie's trails are the main attraction.

Barnidge recognized the potential when he first laid eyes on the resort.

"I used to calf rope here when the forest service had open range," Barnidge said from his rocking chair on the front porch of the 4B Saloon. "My dad used to run cattle through these woods. I knew about the area."

"I figured after developing Las Jaitas at Big Bend I could sell this. We were selling rock, desert and cactus over there. We put up a trading post with bullet holes in it on the foundation of the old military installation where General Black Jack Pershing fought off Poncho Villa's raiders."

"But when I saw the 4B, I took one look and said 'Oh my God. This place has potential.'"

Barnidge is on a mission to get more people riding.

"Trail riding is one of the fastest growing businesses in the country," Barnidge said. "Only so many people can rodeo. Only so many people can show horses. What are the other people with horses doing? We want people to start trail riding."

Barnidge is a former professional tie-down calf roping rodeo rider. He's dressed in his regular attire of cowboy hat, boots and blue jeans. Around his waist is a leather belt with a rodeo championship buckle.

"I was young and dumb then. I had to get a job," he laughed. But his love of horses, trail riding and the woods never left him. The mes-

sage on his answer phone says, "If I don't pick up, it means I'm probably out riding."

Barnidge said some professional rodeo horse trainers work trail riding into their practice routines.

"Charmayne James, the professional barrel rider and trainer, came out with an article in Western Horseman," Barnidge said. "She rides the barrels one day and trail rides the next. She says trail riding keep the horse's mind off the barrels."

Fenn agrees that trail riding is good for her quarter horse.

"You gain a trust with your horse when you come here," Fenn said. "You're putting them through things they're scared of in a way. We went downhill. We went uphill. We went through narrow valleys."

"The horses weren't too sure about it, but got through it. When they found out they didn't get hurt they say, 'This is good. I trust my rider.'"

An added bonus is the scenery, Fenn said. "The woods are gorgeous," said Fenn. "There's nothing like this in Texas."

Basically Barnidge has done zero advertising, relying on word of mouth.

"And we're full up just about every weekend," he said. "Sometimes I wish I had double the stalls, hookups and cabins."

Barnidge does plan on expanding, but slowly. His vision includes a landscaped creek and pond with waterfalls running through the ranch. And he would like to attract other groups such as bike riders and more trail riding competitions.

"We're taking a leisurely pace to build it up," Barnidge said. "I want to see it grow, but see it grow right."

After a long career in resort development in Texas and Louisiana (Lake Conroe, Toledo Bend, La Jaitas on the Rio Grande) Barnidge, now in his 60s, is calling the 4B Ranch his retirement home.

"I live here on the site and this is my last hurrah," Barnidge said. "My brother was disabled when he was 17 and is in a nursing home in Alexandria. Just being close to him is a lot."

He appears to be happy at his home on the range. He's close to his brother, his birthplace and his horses.

"There's a little bit of cowboy in every man's heart," he said, as his rocker creaked on the wooden planks of the faux saloon. He's home.

For more information call (318) 659-3332 or visit www.4BDudeRanch.com.



Keith Andries (from left, top), Mitzi Conn, Tresa Fenn and Wayne Weber reach a trailhead that will lead them on a four-hour trail ride through the Kistachie National Forest. Three-year-old Serenity Burge went on a ride with her grandmother, Thelma Naquin. The cabin railings at the 4B Ranch provide a good drying rack for saddlebags, saddles and blankets. The 4B has four rustic cabins, three suites, 40 RV hookups and 47 horse stalls available for visitors to the ranch.

Great outdoors in Kitsatchie

Men, have you been dragged up and down the Mississippi River by your wife to every elegant plantation home tour in the book? Are you a little bit tired of being reminded that "the pineapple is the symbol of Southern hospitality?" Are you sick of beautiful chandeliers, antique furniture and ante-bellum hoop skirts?

You are? Then a visit to the 4B Ranch may be just the ticket for a change.

Even if you don't have horses, you can make the 4B Ranch a mission control center to reconnoiter any number of manly activities that can be easily disguised as family outings.

The 4B Ranch is a private tract of land smack dab in the middle of the vast Evangeline District of the Kisatchie National Forest and can be the site of any number of outdoor recreational opportunities.

Many of the marked forest trails are within easy walking distance of the 4B and are multi-use paths. The trails can be used for mountain-biking, motorcycle dirt-biking, four-wheeling and hiking.

What a great way to get the video-game generation into the great outdoors.

The 4B Ranch is only a mile and a half from the

site of historic Camp Claiborne, the training grounds for General George S. Patton's famous World War II-era 3rd Army.

Think how impressed your family will be as you regale them with tales of camp history, unit list and layout. To study up on the lay of the land visit <http://www.campclaiborne.com>.

If you have a boat and don't get a chance to float her enough, there's also the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry's nearby Indian Creek Recreational area complete with boat launch and 3000-acre lake. The lake is brimming with fish. Imagine how much fun you'll have baiting your wife's hook every time she catches a catfish, bass or sac-a-lait.

You can also teach your children how to water-ski on the placid water or build sand castles on the man-made beach.

Day use of Indian Creek is only \$3 per carload. Call (318) 487-5058 for more info.

Finally, just a few miles down U.S. 165 from the 4B Ranch, is an historic jewel of a plantation nestled in the longleaf piney woods of central Louisiana.

Well, it's not exactly a plantation home, but it's **See Great outdoors, page 10**

Coming Your Way

The 16th Annual Goldonna Drake Salt Works Festival trail ride will begin at 7 a.m. Sept. 3 near Ashland.

The trail is open to hikers, bikers and horse-back riders. A trail from Goldonna to Winnfield will open for motorized vehicles.

The festival will feature a parade, children's events, food, crafts and wagon rides.

For more information, call (318) 727-8770 or (318) 727-8860.

Deep South Stock Horse Show Association will hold open horse shows Sept. 3, Sept. 17, Oct. 1, Oct. 15 and Oct. 29 at Shady Park Arena in Baton Rouge.

The shows include Western judged and timed events.

Halter begins at 9 a.m., judged at 10:30 a.m. and speed after 1 p.m.

High point and high point reserve awards will be presented at each show. Points will accrue for end-of-the-year awards.

For more information, contact Jenny Redhead at (225) 978-2447.

Silver Spur Riders Club will host open horse shows Sept. 3, Oct. 29 and Nov. 29 beginning at 8 a.m. at Burton Coliseum's indoor arena in Lake Charles.

Classes include English, halter, judged Western and speed events.

Stalls, hookups and concessions available.

For more information, contact Renee Jordan at (337) 855-3279.

The Labor Day Classic Open 4D Barrel Race will take place Sept. 4-5 at the SugArena in New Iberia.

The entry fee is \$40 per horse daily. Exhibitions are \$4 each or three for \$10. A \$15 late fee will apply to each late entry.

RV hookups, stalls and shavings will be available at an additional charge.

For more information, contact Trudy Bulliard at (337) 365-7539.

Livingston Horse Show Association has shows scheduled for Sept. 10 and Sept. 24 at South Park in Denham Springs.

All shows begin at 9 a.m.

Events include halter, performance classes, English and gaited, timed, novice horse and rider classes, and lead-in classes for non-riders.

For more information, contact Deloris Sanchez at (225) 664-3150 or Wanda Johnson at (225) 664-3169.

The 16th Annual Ted Johnson Memorial Rodeo will be held at 8

p.m. Sept. 16 and 17 in Hinston.

The LRCA approved rodeo will feature eight events: bareback, saddle bronc, steer wrestling, barrel racing, tie-down calf-roping, break-away calf roping, team roping and bull riding.

In addition to the major events, goat scrambles and calf scrambles will be held for the children.

Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$4 for children ages 6-12 and free for children under 6. Horseback riders enter at no charge.

For more information, contact Calvin Johnson at (318) 793-5239 or Melinda Johnson at (318) 613-7418.

The Ladies of Cajun Lagniappe fiber artisans are hosting their annual Fiber Arts For-'em Sept. 16-17 at Camp Pearl in southwest Louisiana.

Workshops will include knitting, crochet, needle felting, dying, weaving and spinning. Registration is \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door.

Motel rooms, cabins and RV hookups are available at Camp Pearl.

Registrations forms can be downloaded from the Web site: www.runningmoonfarm.com. Click on the "Fiber Arts For-'em" link at the bottom of the page. Classes and teacher profiles are also available on the

Web site.

For more information, contact Rhonda Selser at (337) 328-8461, Beth Syron at (337) 774-2977 or Charlene Quinilty at (337) 832-3219.

Calcasieu Horseman's Club will host open horse shows Sept. 24, Oct. 30 and Nov. 5 at the Burton Arena in Lake Charles.

The shows are PAC approved and feature four age divisions and classes for special needs riders.

Classes include halter, color, showmanship, leadline, Western and English disciplines, reigning and speed events.

Seven additional shows are planned for the remainder of the year.

For more information, contact (337) 528-9441 or (337) 794-0662.

An off-road trail ride is being sponsored by Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church at 9 a.m. Sept. 25 at the chapel grounds on Hwy. 95 in Chataignier.

The ride will travel mostly field trails with some black top, gravel and wooded areas.

Registration is from 7 a.m. until 9 a.m. Wagon rides and restrooms will be provided. Food and drinks are

available but no ice chests will be allowed on the church grounds or trail ride.

Campers are welcome but hookups are not available.

For more information, contact Lionel Manuel at (337) 885-2991 or the church office at (337) 885-3223.

The Honeybee Breeding, Genetics and Physiology Laboratory in Baton Rouge will hold its annual field day at 10 a.m. Oct. 8 in Baton Rouge.

Topics will include annual cycle of a honeybee colony, selling honey, pest and disease management, Russian honeybees, the small hive beetle and bee management.

The gates will open at 9 a.m. and activities will last until 3:30 p.m. Registration must be completed before Sept. 26. A \$10 registration fee includes refreshments and a catered lunch.

Please mail registration to John Harbo, Honey Bee Lab, 1157 Ben Hur Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70820.

For more information, contact Jose Villa at (225) 767-9293, John Harbo at (225) 767-9288 or Billy Hummer at (225) 742-3541. Additional information is also available on the Web site www.labeekeepers.org.



Great outdoors, *cont. from p. 2*

the location of a farm that harvested Louisiana's most valuable money crop, pine timber.

If your wife loves antiques, here's your opportunity to expose her to an entire antique lumber town at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Longleaf.

One visit to the museum and you and the family can step back through the pages of history and almost hear the grunt and toil of the hundreds of sawyers, engineers, machinists, blacksmiths and laborers who produced lumber circa 1910 in the beautiful sawmill.

Your wife will come to appreciate the steam-powered

locomotive exhibits and displays of machinery used to build those lovely turn-of-the-century Victorian homes in the endless historic districts you've endured, er, visited.

Admission is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children.

Visit <http://www.forestheritagemuseum.org> for more information.

There is one caveat. A trip to any of these tourist spots passes you through Forest Hills, the plant nursery capital of Louisiana. There are any number of nurseries that cater to the enormous nationwide suburban retail ornamental garden market.

Beware, you may find your boat, ATV trailer or horse conveyance stacked high with pine needle bales, liriopie, camellias or other ornamental shrubberies for the trip home.

But what the heck? A little yard work is a small price to pay for the hours of masculine enjoyment afforded by a visit to the 4B Ranch. Enjoy!

A bird's eye view of the 4B Saloon in the main lodge (above) where informal "pickin' and grinnin'" sessions are often held or professional bands are hired to entertain 4B guests. Rodeoing buddies Mitzi Conn and Tresa Fenn pose on horseback.



Treasures, *continued from page 12*

And Nick agrees that quality is their number one priority.

"The fascia is definitely solid wood, but drawers and stuff are plywood, not solid," Nick said. "You have to use plywood. It's better than using solid because solid wood would warp and be too heavy and way too expensive."

"Another thing we do, that others don't do, is our drawer slides are 150-pound test. We do the extras. Because we're here; we made it and we're responsible and never has a single piece ever been returned because it broke or wasn't strong enough."

Nick has made some very creative pieces along the way, like poker tables, and would like to be more adventuresome with his building, but those jobs are few and far between.

"Some folks never dream we can do what we do," Nick said. "We like for people to give us these crazy things to build and challenge us. And we do it. We build it. Stuff we don't think we can do."

"We give the customer what they want. That's all we do."

After years in the business, Sharon says their specialty is building round oak tables at a very reasonable price. The tables seat four and are truly sublime; massive, but light enough to fit in a breakfast nook or office. Oak and New Treasures can also build an oak table to any size the customer wants.

Despite the fact Oak and New Treasures has suffered death in the family, fire and highway repair, Sharon and Nick still have a showroom full of top quality, handmade furniture. And every stick of furniture in the showroom is sold.

"The furniture is all real solid and strong," Sharon said. "Our only advertising is the Minden phone book. You can see our road is just dead, but end of August it will reopen. We have a room full of sold furniture because we go the extra mile."

To visit the Oak and New Treasures showroom, take Exit 44 off I-20 at proceed north a quarter mile. Turn left on Hwy. 80 and the McLemore place is on the left about a half mile. For more information, call (318) 371-0834.

You may be an oak man and not even know it.



Nick Cox adjusts door



Visit your local farmers market

BIENVILLE PARISH

Gibbsland
Gibbsland Farmers Market Assoc.
Main Street
Wed. & Sat. 7 a.m.
until sold out
June - Oct.

CADDO PARISH

Shreveport
Festival Plaza Farmers Market
river front at Festival Plaza
Wed. & Sat. 6:00 - 11 a.m.
June 5-July 31
Sat. only Aug. 1-28

CALCASIEU PARISH

Lake Charles
Charlestown Farmers Market
1001 Ryan Street
Sat. 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Dates TBA

EAST BATON ROUGE

PARISH
Baton Rouge
Red Stick Farmers Market #1
On Fifth St. near Main & Galvez
Parking Garage
Sat. 8 a.m.- noon.
Jan.-Dec.
Red Stick Farmers Market #2
8470 Goodwood Blvd.
Unitarian Church Parking Lot
Tues. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May-July & Sept. - Dec.

Evangeline Parish

Ville Platte Farmers Market
11 East Main Street
Fri. 5 p.m.-7 p.m.
Summer schedule TBA

IBERIA PARISH

New Iberia
Teche Area Farmers Market
Iberia St. & Main St.
Tues. 4 - 7 p.m.
Sat. 7 - 10:30 a.m.
year round

LAFAYETTE PARISH

Lafayette
Acadiana Farmers Market
801 Foreman Dr. & Dulles St.
Tues., Thurs. & Sat.
5 - 10 a.m.
Jan. - Dec.

LAFOURCHE PARISH

Thibodaux
Thibodaux Main Street Market
310 West 2nd Street
Sat. 7 - 11 a.m.
April-July & Sept.-Dec.

MADISON PARISH

Tallulah
Tallulah Farmers Market
408 N. Cedar St., Hwy. 165
Tues., Thurs. & Sat.
8 a.m. - noon, May-Nov.

NATCHITOCHES PARISH

Natchitoches
Cane River Green Market
Cane River Bank
Sat. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April - Nov. 15
ORLEANS PARISH
New Orleans
Crescent City Farmers Market
Locations:
#1-700 Magazine St. & Girod St.
Saturday 8 a.m. - noon
Jan. - Dec.
#2 - Uptown Square, 200
Broadway
Tues. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Jan. - Dec.
#3 - French Market Place &
Governor Nicholls
Wed. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Jan. - Dec.
#4 - American Can Parking Lot
3700 Orleans Ave.
Thurs. 3 p.m.-7 p.m., year round

OUACHITA PARISH

Monroe
Monroe Farmers Market
1212 Washington St.
Mon. - Sat.
6 a.m. - 1 p.m.
June - Aug. 20
West Monroe
West Monroe Farmers Market
1700 North 7th St.
Mon. - Sat.
6 a.m. - 6 p.m.

ST. LANDRY PARISH

Opelousas
St. Landry Farmers Market
952 East Landry St., Hwy. 90
Tues., Thurs. & Sat.
6 a.m. - 11 a.m., Jan.-Dec.

ST. MARTIN PARISH

St. Martinville
St. Martinville Creole Farmers
Market
Evangeline Blvd. & Main St.
Sat. 9 a.m. - 12:30, May-Dec.

ST. TAMMANY PARISH

Covington
Covington Farmers Market
City Hall, 609 North Columbia
Sat. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Wed. noon - 4 p.m.
Jan. - Dec.

Mandeville

Mandeville Trailhead
Community Market
675 Lafitte St.
Sat. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
TANGIPAHOA PARISH
Hammond
Cate Square Farmers Market
Charles St. & Oak St.
Sat. 9 a.m. - noon, Jan. - Dec.
TERREBONNE PARISH
Houma
Cajun Farmers Market of Houma
- Terrebonne
Tunnel Blvd. & Naquin St.
Mon. - Sat.
6 a.m. - 6 p.m., Jan. - Dec.

WASHINGTON PARISH

Bogalusa
Bogalusa Farmers Market
500 Block of Columbia St.
Sat., 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Jun. - Oct. 2

WEST FELICIANA PARISH

St. Francisville
St. Francisville Farmers Market
agricultural pavilion (4-H Barn)
Wilcox St.
Thurs. 1:30-5:30 p.m., May-Nov.
WINN PARISH
Winnfield
Winn Farmers Market
301 West Main & St. John St.
Tues., Thurs. & Fri. 7 - 10 a.m.
June & July
Thurs. 7 - 10 a.m., Aug. - Nov.

ADVERTISING DEADLINES

Sept. 29 issue: Deadline Thurs., Sept. 8, noon
Oct. 13 issue: Deadline Thurs., Sept. 22, noon
Oct. 27 issue: Deadline Thurs., Oct. 6, noon
Nov. 10 issue: Deadline Thurs., Oct. 20, noon

PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING FORM
TO SUBMIT ADVERTISEMENTS.

FOR SALE/WANTED (CIRCLE ONE)

Category _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Ad Copy - 25 Word Limit

All information must be **complete** and **price** of each item for sale must be listed. Ads not meeting these requirements will not be printed. See other regulations under individual headings. Mail ads to P.O. Box 3534, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3534. Email ads to marketbulletinads@ldaf.state.la.us or fax to 225-922-1253.

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Federal - State Livestock Market News Prices
Prices represent averages per hundred weight
Prices for week ending 8/19/05
CATTLE PRICES FROM PRESENT AND PAST

	This Week	Last Year	Five Years Ago
Slaughter Cows Utility	\$54.81	\$53.70	\$40.70
Feeder Steers 400-500 lbs.	\$120.69	\$126.80	\$99.29
Feeder Heifers 400-500 lbs.	\$113.94	\$119.35	\$89.76



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

Market Bulletin, P.O. Box 91081, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9081, (225) 922-1284

MARKET BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION AND RENEWAL

If you would like to become a Louisiana Market Bulletin subscriber, fill out this form and return it along with your \$10 check or money order (for a two year subscrip- tion) to the above address. Allow 4-6 weeks for new subscriptions or renewals to be processed. NOTICE: Please check the expiration date on your address label. All address changes MUST BE accompanied by a current address label from your Louisiana Market Bulletin.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone () _____

- ☐ RENEWAL
- ☐ NEW SUBSCRIPTION
- ☐ ADDRESS CHANGE

MKT-04-01 (r.7/02)

OFFICE USE										
Transmittal #										
Check #										
Date										
Amt. \$.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS

3004 1690 _____



This public document was published at a total cost of \$1,266.88. 16,800 copies of this public document were published in this first printing. This document was published for The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Marketing Division, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806 by Baton Rouge Press, Incorporated, 2621 East Perdue Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70814, under authority of Act of June 6, 1900 for the purpose of disseminating agricultural information. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31.

Unearthing a treasure in Dixie Inn

By Sam Irwin

"Are you an oak man, Jimmie?"

If you saw the movie Pulp Fiction you may remember that line. In the end, Jimmie was an oak man and the Wolf provided an entirely new oaken bedroom suite for Jimmie and his wife, Bonnie.

The question remains. Are you, average *Market Bulletin* reader, an oak man? If you are, read on.

Johnny McLemore of Dixie Inn was an oak man.

Johnny and his wife, Sharon, started a small antique refinishing business back in 1980 called Oak and New Treasures.

The shop is located right on U.S. Hwy. 80, the main drag through the small Webster Parish town.

"We started out buying antiques and refinishing them," said Sharon, a lady who laughs easily. "But antiques got so hard to find we just started building copies and began to get a lot of customers."

She smiled at the remembrance. "I've been at it 25 years and now my original customers' grandchildren are coming in."

Eventually the McLemores began building custom pieces for their consumers in addition to their antique reproductions.

It was a good setup for the young family. Johnny would build the furniture and Sharon would help with the finishing and sales in their tiny showroom adjacent to the shop. After 10 years of furniture making, Johnny died of a heart attack in 1990.

Devastated, but undeterred, Sharon grabbed the reins and learned how to operate every piece of machinery in the shop. It wasn't easy.

"I learned how to woodwork by trial and error," Sharon said. A woman in a wood-

working shop filled with high-powered electric saws and other equipment? Sounds as crazy as a fiddler on the roof, but Sharon had an advantage most men don't have. She had a sewing machine.

"I love to sew," Sharon said. "Furniture building is almost like sewing a dress so I just put my skills from sewing into this. It's real similar to sewing and cooking."

So building an oak sleigh bed is like reading a cookbook and following a recipe for chicken and dumplings?

"Yes," she laughed. "It's a lot of

fun."

Building furniture is fun, but business is hard.

A year-long bridge repair project on Highway 80, a mile from their shop, has severely curtailed walk-in traffic. Two fires nearly shut them down, but Sharon fought through the adversity.

"I just loved the shop so I stayed over here," Sharon said. "We had about eight employees at that time, but then China got into the picture. That hurt us a lot."

It's funny to think that China's emergence in the world trade market affected a mom and pop custom furniture making business in a quaint little town like Dixie Inn, but it did. "They're importing furniture as fast as they can," Sharon said.

Tempting as it was, Sharon refused to compromise on the quality of her furniture's materials.

"We don't use any particle board in our furniture," Sharon said. The Chinese are really good at hiding particle board, but we don't even buy it."

Sharon answered the Chinese challenge by bringing her 22-year-old grandson, Nick Cox, into the business with her.

"Nick grew up in the shop," Sharon said. "This boy used to pull his wagon around here and put all his blocks in it."

Nick has been working with his grandmother in the woodworking shop for more than 10 years and getting paid for the last seven.

As their work force was reduced, Nick and Sharon have been forced to specialize in their woodworking



duties.

Nick does most of the drafting plans and builds the framework and exterior panels of the furniture while Sharon is happy to work on the precision drawers that fit into bureaus, entertainment centers and nightstands.

The secret to the McLemores' success has been their willingness to build whatever the customer wants.

"We're more flexible than any place you'll ever find," Nick said. "We'll give you what you want. I draw the plan from what they tell me."

See Treasures, page 10



Oak and New Treasures owner Sharon McLemore and her grandson, Nick Cox, are seated at one of their specialty pieces - an oak table. Charles Holloway's reflection can be seen in the mirror of a custom chifforobe he ordered. Nick holds a furniture leg he has been building while Sharon screws hardware into a chest of drawers.



Crafting furniture is a family affair for the McLemores of Webster Parish. Storms have come their way, but they have persevered to the benefit of north Louisiana furniture buyers.